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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/24/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM IR VE  
SUBJECT: AHMADINEJAD TO VISIT VENEZUELA FOLLOWING UNGA

REF: A. CARACAS 01361

1B. CARACAS 01879

Classified By: Political Counselor Robert R. Downes  
for Reason 1.4(b).

11. (SBU) On September 24, during his longest "Alo, Presidente" television broadcast to date (eight hours and fifteen minutes), President Chavez confirmed press reports that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad will visit Venezuela on September 26. Ahmadinejad is expected to give a speech at the 62nd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) meeting on September 25 and then visit Venezuela accompanied by Minister of Popular Power for Foreign Affairs (MFA) Nicolas Maduro. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) has not announced either the purpose of the visit or the trip's agenda. Chavez' travel plans remain unclear, but it is likely Chavez will host Ahmadinejad during the Iranian president's stay in Venezuela. The local press reports that Ahmadinejad plans to visit Bolivia on September 27. The Iranian president's upcoming visit represents his third such trip to Venezuela. Chavez has already visited Iran three times, most recently in a June 30-July 2 visit (Ref. A).

12. (C) A former senior Venezuelan diplomat now associated with the opposition told Poloff September 19 that the Office of the Presidency asked the MFA to prepare talking points in support of Iran against United Nations Security Council (UNSC) sanctions in preparation for Chavez' UNGA speech. Venezuelan diplomats have repeatedly defended Iran's nuclear program and criticized UNSC sanctions in meetings with Embassy officials. (Note: Chavez has yet to confirm his attendance to the 62nd UNGA. However, U.S. Embassy Caracas has approved 233 visas for BRV government officials and technical staff to attend the meeting (Ref B). End Note).

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